



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



WELCOME HOME AND THANK YOU VIETNAM VETERANS

Gov. Dennis Daugaard has proclaimed Sunday, March 30, 2014, as "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day," calling on all South Dakotans to gratefully acknowledge our Vietnam Veterans and honor their proud legacy.

"Forty-one years ago, the last American troops were withdrawn from Vietnam," said Gov. Daugaard. "If you have a Vietnam veteran in the family or happen to cross the path of someone who served in Vietnam, I hope you will take a moment to thank them for their sacrifices."

"Our soldiers served honorably and bravely in Vietnam," added Larry Zimmerman, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. "Unfortunately, they arrived home to a country in political turmoil, and never received the recognition they deserve. By setting March 30 aside as a day to focus on our Vietnam veterans, we can show our unified gratitude for their service and the sacrifices that these veterans made on our behalf."

Veterans service organizations throughout South Dakota are hosting various events in their communities.

The Vietnam War is a story of service members of different backgrounds, colors, and creeds who came together to complete a daunting mission. It is a story of Americans from every corner of our Nation who left the warmth of family to serve the country they loved. It is a story of patriots who braved the line of fire, who cast themselves into harm's way to save a friend, who fought hour after hour, day after day to preserve the liberties we hold dear. Take time to thank and acknowledge our Vietnam Veterans and honor their proud legacy.



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Heroes Among Us—showcasing 125 South Dakota veterans.



SD VETERANS COUNCIL

The South Dakota Veterans Council will hold their next meeting Wednesday, April 16, at 10:00 am at the DAV Headquarters in Sioux Falls (1519 W. 51st Street).

SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman will be providing an update on the 2014 legislative session, Operation RAV and the State Veterans Home.

The South Dakota Veterans Council's goal is to provide a practical means by which veterans service organizations throughout South Dakota can effectively contribute to the betterment of all veterans and their families in three principle phases:

- ♦ legislation that affects veterans and their families
- ♦ state and federal programs that affect our veterans
- ♦ advocate for veterans and their families to improve their lives.



MEPS DEDICATES CEREMONY ROOM IN HONOR OF MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT FITZMAURICE

This week family and friends of Medal of Honor Recipient Michael J. Fitzmaurice gathered in Sioux Falls at Military Entrance Processing Stations for the Oath of Enlistment Ceremony Room Dedication. Each one of the 65 MEPS across the country has a room dedicated for the sole purpose of the administration of the oath of enlistment.

In his comments to the group, Colonel William Reinhart noted, "The oath of enlistment is an important statement in which a young man or woman signs up for a number of things. In it an individual swears that they will support and defend the Constitution against those that would do it harm, that they will bear true faith and allegiance to that same Constitution, that they will obey orders from the President and from the officers above them. The real importance of the oath; however lies in what is not explicitly stated. For when one affirms this oath, he or she subordinates their own individual wants and desires to a higher calling to a grand idea and set of principles based on the notion that no one individual is better than the next, and that military service ultimately may require exposing oneself to grave physical danger in defense of this concept."



Reinhart went on to say, "Michael J. Fitzmaurice epitomized this spirit of selfless sacrifice and sense of purpose. For in the end the reason we are gathered here today is that Mike cared more about others than he did himself: Mike, your pride, dedication and heroic service will be forever remembered to all that pass through these doors."

SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman served as the guest speaker for the dedication and included in his remarks the reading of Michael's Medal of Honor citation.

ZIMMERMAN ASSISTS WITH PROMOTION OF OPERATION MILITARY KIDS

SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman recently participated in developing a PSA message to help promote Operation Military Kids in South Dakota. Joining Zimmerman in the creation of the message was Autumn Simunek, South Dakota Miss Sioux Land. Their message stressed that the recognition of a Month of the Military Child affords all of us the opportunity to acknowledge and pay tribute to military children, for when parents serve in the military, their children serve too.

Their messages can be viewed at: http://youtu.be/WVj_u1iISYs and <http://youtu.be/ksqHO7o0qIE>.



ZIMMERMAN DELIVERS OPENING REMARKS AT GREAT PLAINS WRITERS CONFERENCE

SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman delivered the opening remarks at the 38th Great Plains Writers Conference at SDSU in Brookings this week. This year's conference was entitled: Coming Home: War, Healing and American Culture.

During his remarks, Secretary Zimmerman thanked the authors for the messages they share with regard to the impacts of war and the heroes that serve. Zimmerman referenced the contributions that South Dakota's heroes have made and continue to make.

Zimmerman also thanked the partners that work with the Department to improve the lives of our veterans. In closing, Zimmerman briefed participants on the Department's Operation RAV campaign.

During this three-day conference, participants heard presentations on PTSD, reintegration, homecomings, conflicts by era, and war healing.

The Great Plains Writers' Conference was established in the fall of 1976 to call attention to contemporary regional writers and their works and has been expanded through the years to be inclusive of writings and writers from other regions as well. This year's event was presented in cooperation with SDSU's Military Science Program, Veterans' Resource Center, and the Deans Office, University College.



HEROES AMONG US

Carroll E. Peterson (aka "Pete"), a native of Lily and student at Webster High School, opted to forego his senior year and enlisted in the United States Army at Fort Snelling.

Leaving Webster, Pete traveled to Camp Blanding Infantry Replacement Training Camp near Jacksonville, Florida. Peterson spent 11 weeks training with an MOS as a Machine Gunner. In 1940, Camp Blanding was leased to the U.S. Army as an active duty training center. However, during the course of the war, Camp Blanding served as an infantry replacement training center, an induction center, the site of a prisoner-of-war compound and a separation center.

PVT Peterson joined General Patton's 3rd Army, 319th Regiment, 80th Division. He was among many that fought the Battle of the Bulge. During February and March of 1945, they stormed across the Our and Sauer Rivers at Wallendorf, breaking through the Siegfried Line and pursued the Germans to Kaiserslautern where he was wounded in his left leg from hostile fire while crossing the Our River.

Pete separated with Honors from the U.S. Army on June 26, 1946 in Fort Sheridan, Illinois. His awards included:

- Two Bronze Stars
- Victory Medal
- ETO (European Theater Operations)
- American Defense Campaign WWII Medal for the Battle of the Bulge
- Combat Infantry Badge with Wreath
- Three Campaign Stars – The Ardennes, Rhineland and Central Europe Campaigns
- European African Middle Eastern Theater Ribbon
- Two Overseas Service Bars
- Army Occupation Medal Germany
- Good Conduct Medal



Pete attended Northern State University in Aberdeen where he completed his high school education and pursued an engineering career. In 1947 he joined the team at the South Dakota Department of Transportation and 40 years later retired as their project engineer.

Recently, Senator John Thune presented Pete with the "Purple Heart" and a third "Bronze Star."

Pete is still residing in Webster and is, and always will be, proud of his home, his family, his state and his country.

Thank you Pete for your service to this great country!

HEROES AMONG US

Darrell Custer was born in Sioux City, IA, in 1936 in Sioux City, Iowa, and was the oldest of ten children (six boys and four girls). When he was three their family moved to International Falls, MN.

After high school (1954) Darrell entered the United States Army at Minneapolis, MN

Trained as a construction surveyor and pipeline installer, he spent his career as a heavy equipment operator mostly on a Turnapull Cat with scraper. Half of his unit went to Korea, the other half went to France. Darrell ended up in France for two and a half years. They were working on a pipeline across France when DeGaul threw the United States out of France. At that point they went back and dug up all the pipeline they had spent years installing. Darrell said that was their contribution to rebuilding France following World War II.

Darrell received an honorable discharge at Fort Sheridan, IL on Oct. 24, 1957. Following his military career,



Darrell worked for Boise Cascade Construction Materials as a system analyst. In 1959 Darrell married Eleanor Hell and they had three children; Brian, Cheryl, and Kim.

Darrell went to trade school to learn the telephone business and received his apprentice status. He went to work for the local telephone company working his way up from construction, to lineman, to management. In the process he moved to South Dakota and retired in 1991. He sold sporting goods in Pierre for five years before moving to Hot Springs where he worked for Sonny's grocery store. He and his wife managed some apartments before finally retiring completely and moving into the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home in 2008.

Darrell likes to hunt, fish, and work with wood. He can do all three at the home and handle a couple of volunteer jobs as well. It seems Darrell just can't retire completely!!!!!!'

Thank you Darrell for your service to this great country!



SD NATIONAL GUARD PILOT TAKES FINAL FLIGHT

A South Dakota Army National Guard pilot took his final flight last week finishing a career of more than 30 years of service to the state and nation as a military aviator.

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Ken East flew a C-12 King Air fixed-wing aircraft for the last time as a National Guard pilot at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Rapid City. East, of Rapid City, will retire July 31.

"I've been in the military most of my adult life and there were good and bad times, but when I look back on it, I wouldn't change a thing," said East. "As I continue to create new chapters in my life, none of it would be complete without the continued love and support of my family."

Following his flight, East also relinquished command of his unit, Detachment 48, Operational Support Airlift Command, to Chief Warrant Officer 4 Wayne Walker, a position he held since September 2010.

East's military career includes active-duty service in the U.S. Air Force and Army, as well as service in the Montana National Guard. He has flown both fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft to include the UH-1 Huey, OH-58 Kiowa and UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters.

East has flown countless missions over the years, which includes wildland fire suppression missions, drug-trafficking surveillance missions for state and federal law enforcement agencies and U.S.-Mexico border-patrol operations. He also flew aerial support and security for former President Bill Clinton's visit to South Dakota. East also served as the commander of the SDNG's Counterdrug Rapid Assessment and Interdiction Detachment and Company A, 1-112th Aviation Regiment.

East is a veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and served during peace-keeping operations in Kosovo. While deployed to Afghanistan from August 2011- July 2012, East flew the KA-300 King Air aircraft – performing combat-surveillance missions supporting coalition ground forces.

From August 2003 – August 2004, he deployed to Kosovo and flew UH-60 Black Hawks in support of medical evacuation operations throughout the country.

East also served a decade as a civilian aviator, flying as an emergency medical helicopter pilot in Rapid City, Aberdeen and Minot, N.D.

East said he is looking forward to spending more time with his wife, Deb, and children, Eric and Shannon.



SD GUARD ENGINEERS BREAK GROUND ON HABITAT FOR HUMANITY FACILITY

South Dakota Army National Guard engineers are assisting the Black Hills Area Habitat for Humanity to help build a new volunteer training and administration facility next to the ReStore Outlet center at 610 East Omaha St. in Rapid City.

Soldiers from the National Guard began the project Tuesday by breaking ground at the site and demolishing an unsafe, two-story office section connected to the center. Over the next few weeks, Guardsmen will continue to demo the site and remove debris. Once complete, area construction companies will begin prepping the site for the new facility, which includes ground work and foundation construction.

"The first phase is for us to tear it down, which will take us a couple of weeks," said Capt. Mitch Nachtigall, SDNG community projects program manager. "Then Habitat for Humanity has some other partners they are working with to get everything prepped for the 155th Engineer Company to begin building the 5,000-square-foot facility in May."

According to Scott Engmann, Black Hills Area HFH executive director, other community businesses assisting in the project include J. Scull Construction, along with the John T. Vucurevich Foundation, First National Bank, Dave Stafford Architecture, Fisk Engineering, Malone Engineering, Alberston Engineering and a host of other service providers.

Engmann said the new volunteer training facility will become the hub for training volunteers and staff who work every day to build homes, communities and hope for vulnerable, hardworking families.

"The partnership with the National Guard is very important to the Black Hills Area Habitat for Humanity," said Engmann. "The Guard is making this project possible with their expertise. We are able to get this project completed sooner than we expected due to the Guard helping us make it feasible. After working with the professionalism of Capt. Nachtigall and his team, we would be interested in moving forward with more projects in the future."

Habitat for Humanity is able to partner with the National Guard because of their Innovative Readiness Training and Community Projects Program. The program is built upon the long-standing tradition of the National Guard, acting as good neighbors at the local level in applying military personnel to assist worthy civic and community needs.

Nonprofits such as HFH are not the only ones benefitting from such a project; the Guardsmen also gain valuable, real-world experience as engineers.

"We get a lot of value out of doing this because it is a real-world mission versus a training project," said Nachtigall.



Upcoming Events

2014

Apr. 5-6—152nd Yellow Ribbon

Apr. 7—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—BHNC—9:00 am

Apr. 16—SD Veterans Council Meeting—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am

May 2-4—DAV State Convention—Ramkota Hotel—Aberdeen

May 6—SDDVA Mini Conference—Sturgis - Veterans Club, 868 Main Street—10:00 am (MT)

May 7—SDDVA Mini Conference—Pierre - American Legion, 520 S. Pierre Street—10:00 am (CT)

May 8—SDDVA Mini Conference—Brookings - City/County Building, 520 3rd Street—10:00 am (CT)

Jun 5-8—VFW State Convention—Custer

Jun. 19-22—American Legion State Convention—Ramkota Hotel—Pierre

Jul. 7—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—BHNC—9:00 am

Aug. 6—DOL Veterans Job Fair—Augustana College Elmen Center—10:00 am—2:00 pm

Aug. 25-29—NACVSO Training Ramkota Hotel—Pierre

Oct. 6—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—BHNC—9:00 am



The schedule for Operation RAV open house events can be found at:

<http://vetaffairs.sd.gov/publicaffairs/upcomingevents.aspx>

Check it often as dates are continuously added!

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